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NSC BRIEFING 26 October 1954

PAKISTAN POLITICAL SITUATION

I. On 24 October, Governor General Ghulam Mohammed and the Pakistani ruling clique moved to maintain their position and eliminate threat posed by dissident Moslem League politicians under Bengali leadership. Moves included:

A. Declaration "state of emergency" throughout Pakistan, under which Governor General assumed broad legislative and executive powers.

B. Dissolution by order of Governor General and Prime Minister Mohammad Ali of Constituent Assembly, ostensibly because constitutional machinery had broken down.

C. Dismissal of cabinet by Governor General, who invited Mohammad Ali to form new cabinet to govern until new assembly can be elected.

D. Important additions to new cabinet: Defense Minister Ayub (former c-in-c of Pakistani Army, who retains that post); Interior Minister Mirza (former governor of East Bengal);

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Commerce Minister Isbahani (prominent industrialist, former high commissioner to UK).

E. The imposition of press censorship and section 144 of the criminal code, i.e. banning public meetings by more than five persons and otherwise restricting political activity.

F. As yet, no indications civil disorder or attempt by dissidents to oppose emergency orders. Press, on 25 October, generally welcomed Governor General's action as having averted serious crisis.

II. Present developments concerned principally with three factors:

A. Controversies raised within the Moslem League in drafting a constitution, particularly over merits of orthodox Moslem versus secular form of government.

B. Distribution of powers between national and provincial governments.

C. Provincial rivalries--primarily, West Pakistani fear of East Bengal's dominance over country due population advantage (42 million East Bengalis against 34 million West Pakistanis) and Bengali demand for greater provincial autonomy.

III. Crisis ~~was precipitated by~~ prepared by constitutional assembly action on 21

September, stripping Governor General of most his essentially viceregal powers, making prime minister and cabinet directly responsible to assembly (rather than to Governor General).

A. So-called "constitutional coup" spearheaded by largely Bengali dissident group in assembly.

B. Group had apparently obtained Mohammad Ali's support by suggesting that "coup" would prevent Governor General from firing his cabinet (as he had done with Ali's predecessor, dissident leader Khwaja Maximuddin, in April 1953).

IV. Governor General, and ruling group, responded to assembly action and set stage for present emergency action by:

A. Determining that the Governor General still had authority to dissolve assembly as an emergency measure.

B. Undercutting leaders of the dissident group and providing alternative leadership by enlisting the aid of H. S. Suhrawardy--leader of opposition Awami League faction of United Front which swept East Bengal elections in March 1954--and several out-of-favor West Pakistani politicians.

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C. Instituting campaign, in which the above individuals participated, condemning dissident coterie and discrediting it in eyes of general public.

V. Governor General and his ruling clique now appear in firm control of situation, although their rule will necessarily be dictatorial.

A. Clique has strong support of armed forces, civil service.
B. Any move by dissidents would now be firmly dealt with.
C. For all practical purposes, dominant Moslem League is shattered both nationally and provincially.

1. On 22 October, Moslem League convention scheduled for 31 October was postponed, an indication that both League factions felt nothing could be achieved under present circumstances.

2. Unlikely that League will revitalise self in near future.
D. Despite Governor General's statements elections to new assembly to be held soon as possible, these not imminent.

1. Ruling group probably recognizes inability direct elections' course.

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2. Adoption of national constitution necessarily will be delayed.

VI. In attempting to achieve future stability, government faces such critical problems as:

A. Shortage trained and capable personnel for both governmental and private administration.

B. Absence of responsible political groups which might develop effective party system in near future.

C. Economic instability, due:

1. Continued slump in jute and cotton markets.

2. Resultant shortage foreign exchange essential to agricultural and industrial development.

D. Appears that government must receive substantial foreign assistance, at least for next two years, if Pakistan to return to stabilized politico-economic position.